

COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

KEY CHANGES IN THE FEIS FROM CURRENT CONDITION

LEES FERRY MODIFIED ALTERNATIVE H: NPS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (Section 2.4.8)

Modified Alternative H is the NPS preferred alternative. It is a mixed motor/nonmotor alternative with mixed use allowed for 5.5 months (April 1 through September 15), and nonmotorized use from September 16 through March 31. It is characterized by lower group sizes and fewer daily launches except during the winter months. This alternative would allow for a moderate increase in estimated yearly passenger totals (24,657). The NPS would allow passenger exchanges at Whitmore to accommodate trips launching during the mixed-use season (April 1 through September 15). Hiking exchanges would also only be allowed as described above, and it is assumed that 400 people would hike in each year at Whitmore.

WHAT THIS ALTERNATIVE ACCOMPLISHES

Carrying Capacity Standards

- The maximum number of trips at one time would be reduced to 60 (from 70).
- The maximum number of people at one time would be reduced to 985 (from 1,095).
- Total user discretionary time in hours per year would be increased to 567,238 (from 355,081).

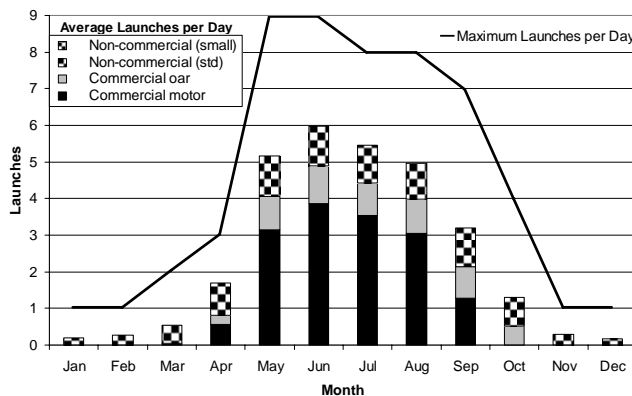
March to October Overall Use

- The estimated number of recreational passengers would be increased to 22,802 (from 22,143).
- The estimated number of trips launching would be increased to 981 (from 866).
- The estimated number of user-days would be increased to 194,899 (from 164,972).

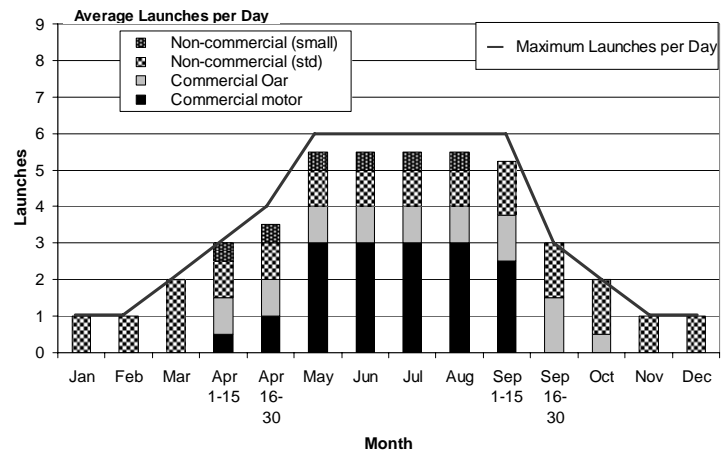
KEY TRIP VARIABLES

Launches per Day

- Launches per day would be decreased to a maximum of six (from nine). Figure 2-10 shows the launches per day by trip type for each month.



Daily Allowable Launches: Alternative A



Daily Allowable Launches: Modified Alternative H

Maximum Group Sizes (includes guides)

- Commercial motor trip sizes would be reduced to 32 people in the summer and 24 people during the rest of the year (from 43).
- Commercial oar trip sizes would be reduced to 32 people in the summer and 24 people during the rest of the year (from 39).
- Noncommercial trip sizes would remain at the current level of 16 people (standard), and a new group size of 8 (small) would be offered to reduce campsite competition along the river.

Maximum Trip Lengths (in number of days)

- The maximum trip length for commercial motor trips would be reduced to 10 days in summer and 12 days in the shoulder seasons (from 18); there would be no winter commercial motor trips (from 30 days currently).
- The maximum trip length for commercial oar trips would be reduced to 16 days in summer (from 18), and 18 days in the shoulder seasons (from 21); there would be no winter commercial oar trips (from 30 days currently).
- The maximum noncommercial oar trip length would be reduced to 16 days in summer (from 18), 18 days September 1-15 (from 21), 21 days in the remainder of the shoulder seasons (from 21), and 25 days in winter (from 30 days currently). Noncommercial motor trips would be reduced to 12 days in summer (from 18), 12 days in the shoulder seasons (from 21), and no motor trips would be allowed in winter.

March to October User-Day Limits

- Commercial motorized use is expected to increase somewhat, to an estimated 76,913 user-days.
- Commercial overall use would be capped at the current 115,500 user-days.
- Noncommercial use would not be capped, increasing to 79,399 user-days (from an average of 51,889).

Winter Use

- Winter use would increase to accommodate approximately 1,855 people per year (from 318).

OTHER ISSUES

Mixed Use/Nonmotorized Seasonal Use

- The mixed-use season would decrease to 5.5 months (April 1 through September 15).
- The nonmotorized use season would increase to 6.5 months (September 16 through March 31)

Whitmore Exchanges

- The NPS has the authority to regulate passenger exchanges, but it has no authority over transportation outside the park boundary, including helicopter flights on Hualapai lands. Passenger exchanges would be allowed at Whitmore to accommodate trips launching during the mixed use season (April 1 through September 15) with a time-of-day restriction (i.e., all exchanges must be completed by 10:00 A.M. local time each day). Exchanges of commercial passengers would only be allowed by companies currently conducting Whitmore exchanges (i.e., grandfather clause in contracts). It is assumed that all passengers exiting their trips at Whitmore would continue to be transported by helicopter similar to today. For passengers beginning their river trips at Whitmore, an estimated 3,635 would be transported in by helicopter and 400 would hike in for a total of 4,035 passengers entering the river corridor. Using the average percentage of total Lees Ferry passengers exchanging at Whitmore from 1998 to 2003, this would result in an estimated 5,715 passengers exiting the river corridor at Whitmore. (See Appendix K

for more details about assumptions used in Whitmore passenger exchange calculations.)

SUMMARY OF ACTUAL AVERAGE YEARLY USE —ALTERNATIVE A

Alternative A			Commercial			Noncommercial		
			Motor	No-Motor	Total	Standard	Small	Total
User-Days	Total	Summer	65,682	26,886	92,568	29,301	0	29,301
		Shoulder	8,578	11,937	20,515	22,588	0	22,588
		Winter	0	0	0	6,159	0	6,159
		Full Year	74,260	38,823	113,083	58,048	0	58,048
Trips Launching	Total	Summer	417	117	534	129	0	129
		Shoulder	56	50	107	97	0	97
		Winter	0	0	0	28	0	28
		Full Year	473	167	640	253	0	253
Recreational Passengers	Total	Summer	12,970	3,275	16,245	1,883	0	1,883
		Shoulder	1,517	1,129	2,646	1,370	0	1,370
		Winter	0	0	0	318	0	318
		Full Year	14,487	4,404	18,891	3,570	0	3,570

NOTE: These are nearest whole numbers. Totals reflect cumulative fractional differences.

SUMMARY OF ESTIMATED YEARLY USE —MODIFIED PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE H

Modified Alternative H			Commercial			Noncommercial		
			Motor	Nonmotor	Total	Standard	Small	Total
User-Days	Total	Summer	67,329	24,580	91,909	27,142	5,266	32,407
		Shoulder	9,584	14,007	23,591	45,547	1,445	46,992
		Winter	0	0	0	34,087	0	34,087
		Full Year	76,913	38,587	115,500	106,776	6,710	113,486
Trips Launching	Total	Summer	369	107	476	123	62	185
		Shoulder	60	62	122	184	15	199
		Winter	0	0	0	120	0	120
		Full Year	429	169	598	427	77	503
Recreational Passengers	Total	Summer	11,511	2,874	14,385	1,901	369	2,270
		Shoulder	1,666	1,556	3,221	2,836	90	2,926
		Winter	0	0	0	1,855	0	1,855
		Full Year	13,177	4,430	17,606	6,592	459	7,051

NOTE: These are nearest whole numbers. Totals reflect cumulative fractional differences.

LOWER GORGE MODIFIED ALTERNATIVE 4: NPS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (Section 2.5.6)

Modified Alternative 4 is the NPS preferred alternative for the Lower Gorge. It is characterized by a redistribution of HRR operations and represents a consensus between Grand Canyon National Park and the Hualapai Tribe on levels of HRR use and other uses originating at Diamond Creek. This alternative, however, presents the NPS's preference for lower levels of pontoon boat use in the Quartermaster area compared to levels proposed by the Hualapai Tribe. Pontoon use levels in this alternative allow for economic growth within the constraints of resource protection. HRR daily passenger totals during the peak season would be limited to 96 with group sizes (including guides) not to exceed 40. No limits would be placed on trips per day in the peak season. This would offer HRR managers increased flexibility in scheduling launches while encouraging booking of smaller trips. Two trips of 35 people (including guides) would be permitted daily during the non-peak season. For HRR overnight trips, three trips per day of 20 people (including guides) would be allowed in the peak season, and one trip of 20 people (including guides) in the non-peak season. Pontoon operations would continue with six boats in the Quartermaster area, with a preliminary

maximum daily capacity of 480 passengers. Maximum daily pontoon passengers could be increased to 600 per day based on favorable performance reviews of concession operations and resource monitoring data. Upriver trip takeouts would be allowed based on continuation trip needs with a maximum of four take outs per day. A floating, formal dock would be allowed at RM 262.5, contingent on environmental compliance and removal of the informal docks at RM 262 and 263. The dock would be appropriately sized to safely accommodate HRR and pontoon use.

WHAT THIS ALTERNATIVE ACCOMPLISHES

Carrying Capacity Standards

- Overall HRR operations would increase, while reducing group size for all HRR trips (both day and overnight trips).
- The number of pontoon boats in the Quartermaster area would be increased to six; however, a maximum of five would be allowed to operate at any one time.
- The number of pontoon passengers would be preliminarily capped at 480 per day. Maximum daily pontoon passengers could be increased to 600 per day based on favorable performance reviews of concession operations and resource monitoring data. Both caps represent an increase from current daily average.
- Three additional campsites would be created, contingent on environmental compliance, primarily for the use by HRR overnight trips. Manipulation of the area would be restricted to the removal of vegetation. The existing campsites would not be changed.

Peak Season Overall Use

- Recreational passengers per day would be increased. Pontoon boat use would remain constant throughout the year. Yearly HRR and pontoon passenger totals would have the potential to increase.
- Three HRR overnight trips and a variable number of HRR day trips (with a total passenger cap of 96) would be allowed to launch daily from Diamond Creek; noncommercial launches would remain the same as the no-action alternative (two launches per day with a maximum of 16 people each).

KEY TRIP VARIABLES

Diamond Creek Launches (number per day)

- HRR day trips would be unlimited during the peak season (aside from group size and daily passenger limits) and limited to two launches per day (of up to four boats) during the non-peak season.
- HRR overnight trips would be limited to three launches per day in the peak season and one launch per day in the non-peak season
- The maximum number of noncommercial daily launches would remain at two.

Maximum Group Sizes (in numbers of people)

- HRR day trips would be limited to 40 people (including guides) in the peak season and 35 in the non-peak season.
- HRR overnight trips would be limited to 20 people (including guides) year-round.
- Noncommercial trip group sizes would remain at 16 people per trip.

Maximum Trip Lengths (in number of days)

- During the peak season trips would be limited to three nights (one night between Diamond Creek and Separation Canyon, one night between Separation Canyon and RM 260, and one night between RM 260 and RM 277).
- During the non-peak season trips would be limited to five nights (one night between Diamond Creek and Separation Canyon, two nights between Separation Canyon and RM 260, and two nights between RM 260 and RM 277).

Campsites

- Three new campsites could be developed for HRR use (below Separation Canyon) with a low level of development (vegetation removal only).

Upriver Travel

- Motorized tow-outs would be allowed below Separation Canyon (RM 240).
- Commercial pick-ups would be limited to four per day during the peak season and one per day during the non-peak season.
- No jetboat tours would be allowed.

OTHER ISSUES

Helicopter Use

- Helicopter use associated with river trips would be limited to HRR exchanges and pontoon passenger access in the Quartermaster area. Helicopter operations in the Quartermaster area take off and land on sovereign tribal land; thus, the NPS does not regulate helicopter operations in this area.

Lunch Stops

- Trips could not combine lunch stops due to the limited physical capacity of nearshore areas.

Pontoon Use

- There could be a maximum of six pontoon boats in the Quartermaster area.
- A maximum of five boats could operate at one time.
- The number of pontoon passengers would be preliminarily capped at 480 per day. Maximum daily pontoon passengers could be increased to 600 per day based on favorable performance reviews of concession operations and resource monitoring data.
- A formal dock, sized to safely accommodate HRR and pontoon use, would be built at RM 262.5, contingent on environmental compliance and removal of existing docks.

SUMMARY OF USE —ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)

Diamond Creek Launches (Group Size, Including Guides)			Available Campsites	Pontoon Trips* (Average Daily Passengers)		Upriver Travel from Lake Mead
Noncommercial Trips	HRR Day Trips	HRR Overnight Trips		Peak Season	Year-round	
Maximum of two trips per day (16 people each).	Average of one trip per day (up to 100 people).	Average of three trips per month (34 people).	15	188**	160	Allowed (unlimited below Separation Canyon).

* Passenger access is by helicopter.

**Daily passenger numbers vary widely, occasionally surpassing 350/day

SUMMARY OF USE —MODIFIED ALTERNATIVE 4

Diamond Creek Launches (Maximum Group Size, Including Guides)			Available Campsites	Pontoon Trips* (Maximum Daily Passengers)	Upriver Travel from Lake Mead
Noncommercial Trips	HRR Day Trips	HRR Overnight Trips			
Maximum of two trips per day (16 people each).	Peak season: variable (40 people per trip). Non-peak season: two trips per day (35 people).	Peak season: three trips per day (20 people per trip). Non-peak season: one trip per day (20 people).	15+3**	480 (600 based on favorable performance reviews and resource monitoring data).	Commercial pick-ups: peak season —four per day; non-peak season —one per day. Tow-outs allowed below RM 240. No jetboat tours.

* Passenger access by means of helicopter.

** Allows for vegetation removal only to develop three HRR campsites on river left.

KEY CHANGES TO RIVER RUNNING OPERATING (Section 2.3.1)

- Recreational passengers, whether commercial or noncommercial, will be limited to one river trip per year from Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek.
- To improve safety, commercial passengers must be accompanied by a NPS-approved guide on all trip-related hikes, including hiking exchanges into and out of the canyon.
- Commercial guides will be included in the commercial group size limits.
- Visitation at the mouth of Tapeats and Kanab Creeks will be restricted to day-use only.
- To protect humpback chub, visitation at the southern half of the Little Colorado River will be restricted seasonally (March 1 to November 30).

OTHER ELEMENTS CONSIDERED IN THE PLAN

Allocation System (Section 2.2.1.3)

The National Park Service's preferred option is the No Action/ Split Allocation System, which continues to allocate use between the commercial and noncommercial sectors. The ratio of commercial to noncommercial use is reflected in the preferred alternative, a ratio that would remain the same for the life of the plan and provide the greatest planning stability for river users and park managers.

Noncommercial Permit System and Transition from Waitlist (Section 2.8.1)

The noncommercial permit system is independent of the CRMP alternatives. The preferred option is a "hybrid" weighted lottery. Each year a lottery would be used to award the following year's noncommercial launches. Chances in the lottery would vary depending on whether or not applicants had been on a Grand Canyon river trip within the past four years. Transition from the waitlist would be a three stage expedited transition option.

Concession Contract—Subject to compliance with 36 CFR Part 51 Subpart D, the NPS intends to award the Hualapai Tribe a temporary noncompetitive concession contract for a maximum of three years for Lower Gorge operations as described in the Final River Management Plan and the *Record Of Decision* for this *Environmental Impact Statement*.